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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A/S CARSON, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOS REPORTEDLY ATTACKS JEM PRESENCE IN HASHABA, NORTH
DARFUR

REF: A) KHARTOUM 788
B) KHARTOUM 583

11. (SBU) Summary: GOS forces targeting former SLA/Unity rebels now allied with JEM attacked the village of Hashaba on June 27-28, according to UN and rebel sources. The attacks consisted of Antonov bombing followed by a ground assault. The indigenous rebel force, comprised of two commanders, 36 men and three vehicles, appears to have been decimated. The GOS forces have since withdrawn to Kutum, taking surviving rebels into custody. The extent of civilian casualties in Hashaba is unclear. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Background Note: The area of Hashaba, approximately 50 kilometers northeast of Kutum, has traditionally been controlled by SLA/Unity. When veteran rebel figure Suleiman Jamous left SLA/Unity to join JEM in April 2009, a number of commanders loyal to him followed suit, creating tensions between SLA/Unity and JEM (Ref B). Many of these commanders relocated to JEM's base in Um Jaras, Chad, although a handful remained in their areas of control in Darfur, giving JEM an indigenous presence there. End background.

13. (SBU) Among the former SLA/Unity commanders who switched allegiances to JEM were Yusuf and Suleiman Hassan, born and raised in Hashaba. UN sources report that they commanded a small force in Hashaba consisting of 36 men and three vehicles. The presence of JEM forces (through defection) in a core SLA/Unity area was too much for SLA/Unity Chairman Abdallah Yahia to bear, and, according to UN sources, he informed SLA/Minnawi of these JEM forces in Hashaba. This information was subsequently passed to the GOS, which took military action on June 27.

14. (SBU) On June 28, SLA/Abdul Wahid Commander Adam Suleiman told SE Gration in Ndjamena that villagers in Hashaba reported a SAF Antonov had dropped 15 bombs in the town's market on June 27. (Note: SLA/Abdul Wahid maintains a presence west of Hashaba. End Note.) Salah Khawaja, a Field Commander with SLA/Unity in nearby Um Rai, similarly told UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) officers that on June 27 the GOS bombed Hashaba using an Antonov. Independent verification was not available; UNAMID sources told poloff on June 29-30 that UNAMID had not yet verified with eyewitness accounts either the bombing or reports of damage.

15. (SBU) SLA/Unity's Khawaja further stated on June 28 that several dozen vehicles manned by GoS military and Janjaweed moved from the Kutum area and attacked Hashaba, arresting 11 people and killing many others. UNDSS Officer Frazer King told poloff that Yusuf and Suleiman Hassan are now dead, as are all but 11 of their men, and their three vehicles were destroyed in attacks. The GOS forces have reportedly withdrawn back to Kutum. UNDSS believes that those arrested may have been taken to El Fasher for questioning.

16. (SBU) Speaking with poloff from El Fasher on June 29, former

Ceasefire Commission (CFC) representative and SLM/MM rebel Adam Ali Ware stated that the June 28 ground attack on Hashaba was aimed at unidentified insurgents who had set up check points in the area and levied taxes on locals there. These insurgents were "not a well identified group," and alternately identified themselves with any number of rebel factions, he said. Several were killed and a number of others were arrested, he said. Ware said he had no knowledge of any bombing in Hashaba on June 27.

17. (SBU) Comment: The presence of JEM or JEM-aligned rebels in Darfur continues to be a source of conflict. While Darfur-based rebel movements have virtually ceased hostilities with the GOS for many months, the Chad-based JEM's recent raids on Karnoi and Um Barro have succeeded in provoking a fierce GOS military response against any JEM presence in Darfur, even an indigenous one resulting from shifting allegiances. The fate of Yusuf and Suleiman Hassan will make other insurgents think twice about joining JEM without re-locating to Chad, and could also affect JEM's future recruitment. Given JEM's continued inability to capture and hold territory in Darfur, its claim to be the most powerful and representative movement in Darfur remains open to question.

WHITEHEAD